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U K R A I N E

US Reasserts Commitment to Ukraine on International AIDS Remembrance Day

Ukraine marked International AIDS Remembrance Day on May 18 with commemorations around the country. In Kyiv, the capital, government officials, representatives of international donor organizations and civil activists gathered at the Red Ribbon Memorial located before the Lavra HIV/AIDS Clinic to commemorate the victims and raise awareness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ukraine. The ceremony was coordinated by the All-Ukrainian Network of Persons Living with HIV/AIDS.



Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy James D. Pettit speaks at the event.

Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy James D. Pettit opened the event with a reaffirmation of the U.S. pledge to help Ukraine overcome the epidemic.

"We stand together to reinforce our joint commitment to increase awareness and understanding of HIV/AIDS; to reduce the stigma

and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS; and to work together to achieve universal access to prevention, care and treatment and support services here in Ukraine," said Mr. Pettit.

Afterwards, clergy from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church held a short prayer service, which was followed by the laying of flowers and the release of dozens of balloons in memory of the AIDS victims.

"Sustaining Family-Care Models for Children in Ukraine" Conference Held in Kyiv

Minister of Family, Youth and Sports Yuriy Pavlenko and USAID Deputy Mission Director Diane Tsitsos opened the "Sustaining Family-Care Models for Children in Ukraine" Conference on May 26 with introductory presentations on the importance of child welfare and the need to support at-risk and vulnerable families.

"Our support for the Families for Children Project during the past three and a half years has been aimed at assisting the government of Ukraine to strengthen child welfare systems through the establishment of family-based alternatives for children that are institutionalized, and to reduce the risk of child abandonment through the development of support structures for vulnerable families, including families affected by HIV/AIDS," explained Ms. Tsitsos.

The conference's goal was to present best practices and model programs for child welfare services, which USAID's Families for Children Project has developed and implemented in Ukraine. Conference participants discussed how these models will be sustained and replicated nationwide in the future.

On the second day of the conference, U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission James Pettit presented awards of appreciation to representatives of the Families for Children Project pilot sites, including local government officials, for their support in developing the project regionally. Daniel Lauer, project director

for project implementer, Holt International, and Families for Children Chief of Party Alyona Gerasimova presented certificates to individuals for personal contributions to the project's success.

Budget Program Performance Evaluation Improves Effective Budget Management in Alchevsk

On May 23, a meeting of the Budget Reform Advisory Board of the city of Alchevsk was devoted to summarizing the results of first-ever performance evaluations done by the city. The advisory board and USAID's Municipal Budget Reform (MBR) Project experts had reviewed eight budget programs developed by the city in the areas of education, health care, culture, and housing and communal services. The evaluation helped the city to ascertain the effectiveness and efficiency of its programs, which established the basis for continuing support to successful programs and discontinuing the ones that had not produced results. "Our work with the MBR specialists in implementing the performance evaluation has demonstrated that we can effectively manage the budget and identify problem areas that need to be reformed," stated Svitlana Shmyhlenko, head of the Alchevsk City Finance Department.



MBR experts and Alchevsk City Council specialists work on the budget program evaluation.

As a result of the performance evaluation, the city decided to implement a program that allows for distance consulting of patients with cardiovascular diseases by specialists of a renowned heart institute in Kyiv; to educate the public about healthy life styles; develop energy saving technologies in municipal housing; and develop new approaches for the city in cultural and educational matters.

The Budget Reform Advisory Board of the Alchevsk City Council comprises representatives of the municipal government and local residents. It is responsible for the overall coordination and implementation of the advanced budget management technique called the Performance Program Budgeting (PPB) method. This method has been implemented in Alchevsk with the support of USAID's MBR Project since 2006.

Ukrainian Association of Administrators of Pension Funds to Implement International Standards with Support from USAID

Executive Director of the Ukrainian Association of Pension Fund Administrators Igor Rogoshevsky and Chief of Party for the USAID Capital Markets Project (CMP) Barry Pitts signed a Protocol on Cooperation and Technical Assistance on May 12.



Barry Pitts, Capital Markets Project Chief of Party and Igor Rogoshevsky, Executive Director of the Ukrainian Association of Pension Fund Administrators

USAID CMP and the Association will work closely together to implement international standards for managing non-state pensions funds (NPF). The Protocol envisages the development and implementation of a continuing professional education program for NPF administrators with input from international experts. Training will focus on strict adherence to both international standards and Ukrainian laws.

The core asset of any NPF is its credibility with the general Ukrainian public. Therefore, cooperation will also focus on education and awareness programs for the general public and for various groups of the Ukrainian population with special emphasis on non-state pension funds governance, financial literacy and effective planning for retirement.

Mr. Rogoshevsky emphasized the importance of international assistance for the development of both the Association and the private pension provision market as a whole. "This is a fast growing market, and the Association needs to assume responsibility for the highest level of compliance of NPF market participants with legal and ethical standards," said Mr. Rogoshevsky.

Municipal Heating Reform Task Force Announced

A first meeting of a newly-formed Municipal Heating Reform Task Force took place on May 14, in conjunction with the opening of the Aqua-Therm Kyiv 2008 Trade Show. The task force, consisting of high-level Ukrainian government officials and representatives of leading international donor institutions, was established by Ukraine's Cabinet of Ministers to develop a National Municipal Heating Strategy. Ukraine's centralized municipal heating system remains outdated and badly in need of reorganization and reform. The task force will have the status of an advisory board to the Cabinet of Ministers.

U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission James Pettit addressed the task force on behalf of the donors. Mr. Pettit noted that, "Ukraine's energy problems – low energy efficiency, high vulnerability to price fluctuations and dependence on imports - are especially evident in the municipal heating sector, resulting in significant social impacts and far-reaching economic consequences."

The meeting and public announcement of the task force came after several months of dialogue between the US Government and Government of Ukraine to establish a structure to help coordinate and implement reforms in the municipal heating sector.

USAID, The World Bank, the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, and the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation had earlier signed a Joint Statement to the Government of Ukraine urging it to address municipal heating reform.

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M O L D O V A

First Moldovan Software Firms Succeed in Implementing Recognized Software Process Improvement Methods

Phase one of Moldova's first software process improvement program, supported by the USAID Competitiveness Enhancement and Enterprise Development (CEED) project and the USAID Regional Competitiveness Initiative, has produced notable early results. Two of the three participating software companies, Q-Systems and Alpha Soft, have successfully passed their initial appraisals for IT Mark®, a certification scheme developed by the European Software Institute specifically for small and medium information technology enterprises. The appraisal for the third company in the pilot program, Deeplace, is scheduled for July 2008.



Ivaylo Gueorguiev, Program Manager of ESI Center Bulgaria, leads workshop participants in an overview of global software improvement methods such as IT Mark.

Using IT Mark, the quality and maturity of the processes in information technology SMEs are benchmarked against international standards in three areas: business management, information security management, and software & systems processes management.

To build on this success and create momentum for the second phase of the software process improvement program, CEED organized an awareness workshop on April 11 to introduce more Moldovan software companies to IT Mark and other advanced software process improvement methods, highlighting how these methods can enhance their competitiveness and build a culture of excellence.

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